



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WSDA wants permanent rule on holding out-of-state nursery stock

OLYMPIA --As part of its ongoing effort to help protect the nursery industry from plant pests and diseases, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is considering making permanent a requirement that nursery dealers temporarily hold trees, shrubs, and woody vines received from out of state.

The department adopted an emergency rule in March that required nursery dealers to hold certain plant material for one business day after notifying WSDA of the shipment. The department is now proposing to make the rule permanent.

A public hearing on the proposal is scheduled for 2 p.m. on June 22, in room 205, at the WSDA office, 1111 Washington Street SE, Olympia.

Under the proposal, licensed nurseries, which include garden centers at chain stores, some landscape firms, and greenhouses, must notify WSDA when they receive a shipment of trees, shrubs, and woody vines from out of state. After being notified, WSDA staff will review the species, the amount and source of the plant material and determine if a WSDA inspection is necessary. During that 24-hour period, the nursery must keep the plant material separate from other nursery stock. If WSDA does not contact the nursery within one business day after being notified of the shipment, the nursery can sell the plant material to the public.

The reason for the proposal, according to Brad White, WSDA's pest program manager, is the increase of invasive, non-native plant pests and diseases entering the state, particularly the citrus longhorned beetle, Japanese beetle, and the plant pathogen, *Phytophthora ramorum*, which causes sudden oak death.

"The problem has gotten progressively worse in the last three years," White said. "The risk of entry for sudden oak death is particularly urgent."

Sudden oak death is a new disease detected in the United States for the first time in 1995 in California. Tens of thousands of trees have been killed in California since then, the vast majority being oaks and tanoaks. Most of the oak trees native to Washington do not appear to be susceptible to the disease. Host material vulnerable to *P. ramorum* are camellia, rhododendron, Douglas fir, evergreen huckleberry, kalmia, pieris, and viburnum.

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Written testimony on the proposal can be sent electronically, by mail or by fax to Henri Gonzales, Washington State Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 42560, Olympia, WA 98504, FAX: (360) 902-2094 or e-mail: hgonzales@agr.wa.gov. Written testimony must be received by June 22. The tentative adoption date of the proposed rule is July 6.

Persons with questions about the proposal may contact Tom Wessels, manager of WSDA plant services program at (360) 902-1984 or by e-mail at twessels@agr.wa.gov. Persons with questions on WSDA's rule-making process may visit the WSDA Web site at www.agr.wa.gov, then click respectively on Plants & Insects, Rule-making Activity, and Nursery Reporting/Hold Period.

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